

Officer Herndon will be laid to rest today, and I want to take a moment to honor his life, his service to his community, and speak about the noble profession he chose.

Officer Herndon was responding to a report of a break-in on Friday morning, and upon his arrival, he was murdered on the scene. He had been a police officer at Mount Holly for less than 2 years. He is described by his colleagues on the Mount Holly Police Department as “the guy you just couldn’t help but like.” He was active in his community, not only as a law enforcement officer but as a volunteer in local schools. His goal was to become an FBI officer, and he was just approaching the 2 years he needed as a police officer to become eligible to apply for the FBI.

Officer Herndon’s life and promising career were senselessly taken away. His tragic death is a reminder of the dangers our men and women in blue face every single day that they go to work to protect our communities.

In 2020, this year, we have lost 47 police officers who have been killed in the line of duty across the United States. Of those, 8 were ambushed in premeditated attacks, 2 were victims of an unprovoked attack, and 37 officers were killed in the line of duty. These gruesome killings are in addition to the hundreds of officers who have been shot and injured this year.

These 47 Americans are not only law enforcement officers—they are someone’s parent; they are someone’s spouse; they are someone’s child. That is a point that has unfortunately been neglected by some, especially given the shameful effort to not only minimize the work of law enforcement but to also demonize it.

Law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to keep us safe every single day. Our debates in Congress should not be about whether to defund or abolish the police; they should be about how we can respect and support law enforcement through greater investments and commonsense reforms.

I will never turn my back on the brave men and women of law enforcement who protect North Carolina and protect communities across this great Nation.

Congress needs to start showing more support and respect for law enforcement, not only through our words but through our actions, and we must hold violent criminals who target them accountable. That is why I and several other Senate colleagues have introduced the Protect and Serve Act. It is legislation that would create Federal penalties for individuals who deliberately target local, State, and Federal law enforcement officers with violence.

Next Congress, I plan to reintroduce this legislation and work to build support until its passage because, with increased penalties like those proposed in the Protect and Serve Act, criminals may start thinking twice before targeting an officer, and if they choose to do it, they are going to regret it.

There is no doubt that being a law enforcement officer is one of the hardest and most dangerous jobs in this country, but it is also one of the most noble and honorable professions. They run to danger to protect others. They are fully aware of those dangers as they go through the police academy and begin their career as officers. Yet they do it every single day.

Tyler Herndon is an officer who answered the call, ran into danger to protect others, and lost his life. My thoughts and prayers are with Officer Herndon’s family, the Mount Holly Police Department, and the community he served. I want Tyler Herndon’s family and law enforcement across the State of North Carolina to know that we will never forget the sacrifice he made and they make every day and that we are going to work hard to get them the respect and the resources they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to honor and pay tribute to our Senate colleagues who are departing at the end of this Congress. I was able to work with all of them in different ways, and we are going to miss them.

Before that, I did want to mention the importance of the continuing negotiations on end-of-the-year pandemic relief. I have been involved in those, and I want to thank those Members who have been at the forefront of this all through the weekend, all through the last few weeks.

I cannot stress how important it is right now. My State just got through a spike in COVID. We lost so many people. We have so many small businesses, like so many States in this country, that are closed down.

While we see the light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccine, I talked to a friend of mine whose husband is an infectious disease doctor, and she said when she saw those trucks rolling out in Michigan, she just started to sob just seeing it on TV. I think that is how a lot of people in this country feel, but it is on us right now to make sure we get the funding so that vaccine gets distributed as it should and to also ensure that our economy is in a place that when we start going back into the workplace—not just virtually—we will be able to bounce back as we should, and that means pandemic relief at the end of this year.

TRIBUTE TO DOUG JONES

Mr. President, so my departing colleagues—and I like every single one of them. I will start with my good friend Senator DOUG JONES.

Throughout the years, I have gotten to know DOUG, as so many of us have, as a colleague but more importantly, as a friend. These past few years have not been easy for anyone, but what they have called for are leaders who will do what is right and who are willing to show courage and take risks.

One of those leaders is DOUG JONES, a native of Fairfield, AL, and the son of a father who worked in the steel industry. My grandpa worked in the iron ore business underground. I know a little bit about this.

DOUG graduated from the University of Alabama and the University of Alabama Law School. Afterwards, he served as a top aide for his home State Senator Howell Heflin. I still remember Howell Heflin. Long after Walter Mondale had left government, I was working with him in Minnesota, and Howell Heflin would call for him, and the accent was a little hard for a Minnesotan to get through. I remember Mondale, literally within a few hours, howling with laughter when he took the call. I am sure he was a great mentor for DOUG to have when he first got into politics.

DOUG then became the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Alabama, and in 2017 he became the first Democrat to represent Alabama in the U.S. Senate since 1997.

I will never forget the first speech DOUG gave on the Senate floor. It was about gun violence, calling for bipartisanship and pragmatism and for the courage to seize the moment. He actually quoted Senator Heflin, saying:

Our Constitution itself came about through a series of great compromises; it was not written by ideologues who clung to their way or no way. Compromise and negotiation—the hallmarks of moderation—aimed at achieving moderate, centrist policies for our country should not be viewed as negatives.

DOUG believed in a simple philosophy when he was here: Never compromise your principles—and he certainly showed us that—but work with your colleagues, Democrat or Republican, to move our country forward.

I remember what he said about gun safety in his maiden speech. He was hopeful that we may have reached a tipping point because “our young men and women are awakening the conscience of America.”

That is something that DOUG has done in his time in the U.S. Senate, and he showed it even before that when, as a prosecutor, he brought closure to the families of the four little girls killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing by prosecuting those who sought to use fear, hatred, and violence to inhibit the rights of others. He did that for his State because that was his job, but in so doing, he brought closure and justice for our Nation.

We are all fortunate to call DOUG a friend. He has been a champion for veterans. After the tax bill had a problem with survivor benefits for Gold Star families, it was DOUG who introduced the bill to fix the problem and got it passed for those who had already made the ultimate sacrifice.

It has truly been an honor and a privilege to work alongside Senator JONES. Integrity and decency—those are the words I think about when I think about DOUG JONES, and he will be missed in this Senate.